

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2010**

The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, February 8, 2010, in the Cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street in Bristol, RI. The Chairperson, Paul Silva, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 PM.

Present: Paul Silva, Chair, Paul E. Brule, Vice-Chair, William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, Marjorie J. McBride, Secretary, Denise R. Arsenault, John C. Bento, Diana B. Campbell, Karen A. Lynch and John P. Saviano; Melinda L. Thies, Superintendent; Mario Andrade, Assistant Superintendent; Pauline A. Silva, Director of Administration and Finance; and Mary N. Almeida, Director of Literacy and Title I; and Andrew D. Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor

Absent: none

OPENING BUSINESS

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Diana Campbell spoke as the Executive Director of Mosaico about the 2010 census. Mosaico, in coordination with several volunteers, is working toward a complete count in Bristol, which is important when it comes to funding; in the past Bristol had only 63% return. Forms are coming out on March 19, families have one month to complete and return them. Volunteers will be at several locations in town, such as the food pantry, Mosaico and Benjamin Church Community Center to assist people with the forms. Mrs. Campbell appreciated the opportunity to make this important announcement.

PUBLIC FORUM

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation #S2010-8 A-D: CONSENT AGENDA – PERSONNEL

A. SUSPENSION, NON-RENEWAL AND/OR TERMINATION OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL: Based on the uncertainty of sufficient Federal, State and local funding for general and categorical programs for the 2010-11 school year, and program reductions, consolidation of classes, re-alignment of staff and elimination of positions to more

efficiently and effectively use the school system's assets, the Superintendent recommends to the School Committee the termination/ non-renewal of the following listed personnel effective the last day of the 2009-10 school year:

[92 Certified Staff]

B. SUSPENSION, NON-RENEWAL AND/OR TERMINATION OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL: The Superintendent recommends to the School Committee the termination/non-renewal, effective the end of current assignment and/or the last day of the 2009-10 school year, whichever occurs first, of the following listed teachers due to the return of teachers from leaves of absence and/or the non-renewal of the limited contracts:

[3 Certified Staff]

C. SUSPENSION, NON-RENEWAL AND/OR TERMINATION OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL: The Superintendent recommends to the School Committee the termination/non-renewal, effective the last day of the 2009-10 school year, of the following listed teachers due to their lack of permanent certification in the required area and/or the non-renewal of the limited contracts:

[4 Certified Staff]

D. SUSPENSION, NON-RENEWAL AND/OR TERMINATION OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL: Based on the Superintendent's belief that there exists more qualified teachers available for their positions and/or teachers who are a better fit for the District, the Superintendent recommends to the School Committee the termination/non-renewal of the following listed non-tenured personnel effective the last day of the 2009-10 school year:

[2 Certified Staff]

Mrs. Arsenault asked to remove Section B for a separate vote so she can recuse herself.

MOTION: Mr. Brule motioned to approve. Mrs. McBride seconded.

Mrs. Arsenault stated that although this is a yearly practice, this year is different because of the Board of Regents' new Basic Education Plan for the State of Rhode Island. Her understanding is this law supersedes all laws we create and contractual agreements we may have; we have the responsibility to deliver a certain type of education outlined in the regulations. If we lay off nearly one-hundred personnel, it will severely impact our ability to deliver the education plan required. Some of the people we lay off will get other jobs. Mrs. Arsenault cannot support this recommendation. She requested the BEP Regulations be distributed to the full Committee, all Town Council members and both libraries for all to see. She urged the Committee to consider seriously what they are about to do.

Mr. Saviano commented that RIDE has said that if there is an existing contract, this will not take place until the contract is over. Mrs. Arsenault said a letter dated October 20, 2009 urged superintendents to review their collective bargaining agreements before March 1; we are being told we are expected to deliver a type of education regardless of contractual language; this may mean opening the contracts. Many of the teachers' names on this lay-off list are here because of seniority. The law takes effect July 1, 2010.

Mrs. Thies agreed with Mr. Saviano's assessment; that is the guidance Superintendents received from the Commissioner, RISSA and David Abbott of RIDE. We must notify personnel of non-renewals by March 1. Mrs. Arsenault asked Mrs. Thies if she believes we can conduct education without these teachers. Mrs. Thies responded these are fine teachers, but we must be in compliance by the March 1 deadline; without a viable funding formula we must proceed with an abundance of caution; we are bound by an archaic system forcing us to make these decisions.

Mrs. Lynch asked if the Board of Regents has a right to mandate. Attorney Henneous said this does not trump the teacher tenure statute; this supersedes certain provisions and contracts, but by law, those individuals must be notified of lay-offs. Mrs. Arsenault's concern is that without those teachers we cannot uphold the law. Mr. Henneous stated that is speculative on her part; an action taken now

will not put the District out of compliance with BEP.

Mr. Silva commented that no one here enjoys what they have to do; they are placed in an unwanted position not knowing how much funding we will have.

The motion to approve Recommendation #S2010-08, Sections A, C and D passed by a vote of 8 to 1 with Mrs. Arsenault opposed.

MOTION: Mr. Brule motioned to approve Section B of Recommendation #S2010-08; Mrs. McBride seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 8 to 0 with Mrs. Arsenault recused.

PRESENTATION: GRANT PROPOSAL FOR GREEN INITIATIVE—SOLAR PANELS FOR MT. HOPE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Walter Burke, Director of Bristol Parks and Recreation, and Mr. Kenneth Marshall, Bristol Town Council President, presented a proposal for a green initiative collaboration. Mr. Burke offered his services in writing some grants; the aim is to raise \$2.3M to place solar panels on the roof of Mt. Hope High School as described in the Alteris Renewables proposal. He asked permission to move forward to speak with the Superintendent and the Director of Facilities to obtain schematics of the building; their hope is to build this into a curriculum program to provide a learning experience for the students; Mr. Burke needs a contact person within the high school to provide

programming information; they will be making a non-renewable application. Mr. Burke explained the Town of Bristol just receive a \$140,000 grant for a feasibility study for a wind turbine, as part of the East Bay Energy Consortium; there are many different sources of funding and the inclusion of a curriculum component will open even more doors.

Mr. Marshall said we need to do everything we can in our power as a collaborative, to reach out to local vendors to do a preliminary review, to explore using the high school roof for other purposes. This could lead to an apprentice building trades program for students. Mr. Marshall explained the solar panels have the capability of producing a ½ megawatt of electricity; as a Town we need to reduce the cost of the budget to alleviate the burden on tax payers and also reduce the energy costs to the schools; this would benefit both Bristol and Warren students. We cannot be afraid to ask “What if.” This proposal costs nothing right now; it could end up being a model for the East Bay Energy Consortium; Mr. Burke is an excellent grant-writer for the Town of Bristol. He thanked the Committee for this opportunity to present this proposal.

Mrs. McBride commented that we certainly do not have money to fund anything like this right now; this has a large price tag; she asked where the Town is with windmills for electricity and the possibility of using the school as one of those sites. Mr. Marshall responded the Town has submitted an application to explore an energy-producing

facility at Minturn Farm to off-set energy costs; this site was considered for a turbine as well; we should take baby steps.

Mrs. Campbell is intrigued with the education piece and asked if working with the schools would be done by Alteris. Mr. Marshall said we can apply for the grant and do not necessarily have to take it; Alteris would benefit from something like this; the more space available for the panels, the lower the cost; this is the first step of many and they are hoping this is a seed that will blossom.

Mr. Saviano commented that the windmill is an investment of over \$1M, would the cost be covered by grants or would the Town have to indebt itself; Mr. Marshall said the total estimated cost is \$4M, if they can capture $\$3\frac{3}{4}$ M, match it, then locate or borrow with a bond \$2.5M, the speculation is $\$1\frac{1}{2}$ M savings per year, so pay back would be completed in eight years; this is a long term investment. Another opportunity is stimulus funds; the Governor is still looking for projects to be submitted; this would be a wise investment and also a good lesson to teach our students.

Mrs. Thies applauds the efforts and highly endorses this partnership; she recommends that she and Dr. Andrade be involved in the development of the RFP; she thanked Mr. Burke and Mr. Marshall for the work they have done.

Mr. O'Dell asked how confident they are that this would be of low cost

to the District. Mr. Marshall responded that if we do not ask, we will get nothing; the longer we wait, the less opportunity there will be; there is money in the system, it's a matter of getting it down to the right places. Mr. O'Dell and Mrs. McBride were concerned that we just spent \$1M on the roof. Mr. Marshall said these panels work best on light colored surfaces. Mr. Burke said each of the nine towns in the consortium has a vote.

Mrs. Arsenault thanked Mr. Burke and Mr. Marshall for being at this meeting and agreed that there is money waiting to be tapped; it requires thought and effort. Article G-12-1-3.6 refers to engineering and technology we are to address in our schools; the thought of the students taking part in something like this is fantastic; the thought of free energy down the road is exciting.

Mr. Silva asked if there were any objections to Mr. Burke and Mr. Marshall moving forward; no objections were voiced. Mr. Silva suggested they meet with Mrs. Thies to get the ball rolling and any School Committee action that may be needed can be arranged through Mrs. Thies, who can also make the connection with high school administration. He thanked Mr. Burke and Mr. Marshall for coming. Mrs. Campbell suggested Mr. Eaton be included in the discussions.

Mr. Marshall had one other vision—a kilowatt hour meter so students and the public can watch the kilowatts grow. Mr. Silva suggested

having a corresponding dollar savings meter as well.

BUDGET FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. O'Dell said their next meeting is March 15, 6:30 PM, to discuss primarily facilities; Joint Finance meetings will be scheduled in March; also possibly a brief meeting in two weeks for a potential urgent situation.

POLICY/ COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mrs. Campbell reported the next meeting is March 1, 6:30 PM at Oliver; discussion continues on sexual harassment and bus policies.

Wellness Committee

Mrs. Campbell said the Committee has simplified the health and wellness policy; a brochure will be sent to families and a page will be included in handbooks. The School Committee was given an invitation to a Valentine's dinner at the high school which was arranged and will be prepared by students; the foods to be served will be healthy foods.

PERSONNEL/ CONTRACT NEGOTIATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Saviano had nothing remarkable to report.

FUTURE ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES TASK FORCE

Mrs. Lynch said the next meeting is February 23 at 6:00 PM in the Oliver conference room; the Task Force will be making their presentation to the School Committee on March 8.

Announcements

Mrs. Thies said she and the administration team will be meeting with each of the PTO groups to introduce the new members of administration, to share in the celebration of progress made by the District to date, and to put out a call to action to support the request for the funding necessary to continue that progress. The dates of these meetings are posted on our website. So far the response has been great. Parents' support is needed at Joint Finance; once determined, the Joint Finance Meeting dates will be posted on the website.

Mr. O'Dell said he is thinking of attending tomorrow's Warren Town Council meeting because of an interesting agenda item: action regarding the number of people to serve on the School Committee.

Mr. Silva mentioned a letter received from Diane Mederos congratulating the DECA Club for making their last payment on a 20 year promissory note; the payment was made early; he congratulated the DECA people for being responsible with their finances.

As a follow up to the discussion on the BEP, Mrs. Arsenault said the document can be accessed through the RIDE website: [www.ride.ri.gov / regents regulations/ bep](http://www.ride.ri.gov/regents/regulations/bep).

Mrs. Campbell reminded everyone that the Kickemuit Education Foundation Bodacious Bee is scheduled for April 30 at Blithewold. She mentioned a School Committee team.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - 8:00 PM

MOTION: In accordance with Open Meeting Laws 42-46-5(a)(1)-(9), 2(b), Mr. Saviano motioned to go into Executive Session at 8:00 PM for legal advice from the attorney. Mrs. McBride seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Silva said no action will be taken in the session and none when open session resumes other than to adjourn.

RESUMPTION OF MEETING – 8:08 PM

In Executive Session, the Committee received legal advice from Attorney Henneous. No action was taken during Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:09 PM

MOTION: There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. McBride, seconded by Mrs. Campbell, motioned to adjourn at 8:09 PM. The

motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie J. McBride, Secretary

/c